

441—7.21(17A) Food assistance hearings and appeals.

7.21(1) Appeal hearings. All appeal hearings in the food assistance program shall be conducted in accordance with 7 CFR 273.15.

7.21(2) Food assistance administrative disqualification hearings. All food assistance administrative disqualification hearings shall be conducted in accordance with 7 CFR 273.16.

7.21(3) Waiver of right to an administrative disqualification hearing. An individual accused of an intentional program violation may waive the individual's right to a food assistance administrative disqualification hearing.

a. When a case is referred for an administrative disqualification hearing, the appeals section shall advise the individual that the individual may waive the individual's right to an administrative disqualification hearing by signing and returning Form 470-5530, Waiver of Right to an Administrative Disqualification Hearing.

b. By signing the waiver, the individual gives up the right to an administrative disqualification hearing, agrees to repay any overpayment and agrees to be disqualified from the food assistance program for the period specified.

c. If the individual does not sign and return Form 470-5530, Waiver of Right to an Administrative Disqualification Hearing, within ten days of the date of the written notification, an administrative disqualification hearing shall be initiated.

d. Even after the administrative disqualification hearing is scheduled, the individual may sign and return Form 470-5530, Waiver of Right to an Administrative Disqualification Hearing, prior to or during the administrative disqualification hearing. The presiding officer shall dismiss the administrative disqualification hearing since the individual has agreed to repay any overpayment and agreed to be disqualified from the food assistance program.

e. The signed waiver shall carry the same penalties as the penalties for an individual found guilty in an administrative disqualification hearing.

f. No further administrative appeal procedure exists after an individual waives the individual's right to an administrative disqualification hearing and a disqualification penalty has been imposed. The disqualification penalty shall not be changed by a subsequent fair hearing decision. The individual is entitled to seek relief in a court having appropriate jurisdiction. The period of disqualification may be subject to stay by a court of appropriate jurisdiction or other injunctive remedy.

7.21(4) Conduct of a food assistance administrative disqualification hearing. Hearings over disqualification of a household member for an intentional program violation shall be conducted by a presiding officer.

a. The department of inspections and appeals shall serve an Intentional Program Violation Hearing Notice upon the household member by first-class mail, postage prepaid, addressed to household member at the last-known address 30 calendar days before the initial hearing date.

b. The household member or that person's representative may request to postpone the hearing for up to 30 days, provided the request is made at least 10 calendar days before the scheduled hearing date.

c. At the hearing, the presiding officer shall advise the household member or that person's representative that the household member has the right to refuse to answer questions during the hearing and that the state or federal government may use the information in a civil or criminal action.

7.21(5) Consolidating hearings. Appeal hearings and food assistance administrative disqualification hearings may be consolidated if the issues arise out of the same or related circumstances and the household member has been provided with notice of the consolidation by the department of inspections and appeals.

a. If the hearings are combined, the time frames for conducting a food assistance administrative disqualification hearing shall apply.

b. If the hearings are combined for the purpose of setting the amount of the overpayment at the same time as determining whether or not an intentional program violation has occurred, the household shall lose its right to a subsequent hearing on the amount of the overpayment.

7.21(6) Attendance at hearing. The household member shall be allowed ten days from the scheduled hearing to present reasons indicating good cause for not attending the hearing.

a. The appeals section shall certify the motion to vacate to the department of inspections and appeals for the presiding officer to review the motion, hold any additional proceedings, as appropriate, and determine if good cause exists for the default as specified in subrule 7.13(5). Timely filed motions to vacate shall be granted only for good cause shown. The burden of proof as to good cause is on the moving party.

b. Unless good cause is determined, when the household member or that person's representative cannot be located or fails to appear at the scheduled hearing, the hearing shall be conducted without that person. In that instance, the presiding officer shall consider the evidence and determine if the evidence is clear and convincing that an intentional program violation was committed.

c. If the household member who failed to appear at the hearing is found to have committed an intentional program violation, but the presiding officer later determines that this person or the person's representative had good cause for not appearing, the previous hearing decision shall no longer be valid. A new hearing shall be conducted.

d. When good cause for failure to appear is based upon a showing of nonreceipt of the hearing notice, the household member has 30 days after the date of the proposed decision to claim good cause for failure to appear.

e. "Good cause" for purposes of this rule is defined as an emergency circumstance that is beyond the control of the party and that prevents the party from being able to participate in the hearing.

(1) Examples of good cause include, but are not limited to:

1. Sudden, severe illness or accident involving the party or the party's immediate family (spouse, partner, children, parents, sibling).
2. Death or serious illness in the party's immediate family.
3. Other circumstances evidencing an emergency situation which was beyond the party's control and was not reasonably foreseeable.

(2) Examples of circumstances that do not constitute good cause include, but are not limited to:

1. A lost or misplaced notice of hearing.
2. Confusion as to the date and time for the hearing.
3. Failure to follow the directions on the notice of hearing.
4. Oversleeping.
5. Other acts demonstrating a lack of due care by the party.

7.21(7) Food assistance administrative disqualification hearing decisions. The presiding officer shall base the determination of an intentional program violation on clear and convincing evidence that demonstrates the person committed, and intended to commit, an intentional program violation.

a. The proposed and final hearing decisions shall be made in accordance with rule 441—7.16(17A) unless otherwise specified.

b. The appeals section shall notify the household member and the local office of the final decision within 90 days of the date the household member is notified in writing that the hearing has been scheduled. If the hearing was postponed pursuant to 7.21(4) "b," the 90-day period for notifying the household member of the final decision shall be extended for as many days as the hearing is postponed.

c. The department shall take no action to disqualify a person from receiving food assistance before receiving the final appeal decision finding that the person has committed an intentional program violation.

d. No further administrative appeal procedure shall exist after the final decision is issued. The determination of an intentional program violation shall not be reversed by a subsequent hearing decision. However, the person may appeal the case to the Iowa district court.

e. When a court decision reverses a determination of an intentional program violation, the appeals section shall notify the local office of the specifics of the court decision.

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